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AN

ELEGY

WRITTEN IN A

Country Church Yard.

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Elegy
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Advertiſement.

THE following POEM *came into my Hands by Accident, if the general Approbation with which this little Piece has been ſpread, may be call'd by ſo ſlight a Term as Accident. It is this Approbation which makes it unneceſſary for me to make any Apology but to the Author: As he cannot but feel ſome Satisfaction in having pleas'd ſo many Readers already, I flatter myſelf he will forgive my communicating that Pleaſure to many more.*

The EDITOR.

35x

AN

ELEGY, &c.

THE *Curfeu* tolls the Knell of parting Day,
The lowing Herd winds ſlowly o'er the Lea,
The Plow-man homeward plods his weary Way,
And leaves the World to Darkneſs, and to me.

Now fades the glimmering Landſcape on the Sight,
And all the Air a ſolemn Stillneſs holds
Save where the Beetle wheels his droning Flight,
Or drowſy Tinklings lull the diſtant Folds.

Save that from yonder Ivy-mantled Tow'r
The mopeing Owl does to the Moon complain
Of ſuch as, wand'ring near her ſacred Bow'r,
Moleſt her ancient ſolitary Reign.

Beneath

Beneath thoſe rugged Elms, that Yew-Tree's Shade,
Where heaves the Turf in many a mould'ring Heap,
Each in his narrow Cell for ever laid,
The rude Forefathers of the Hamlet ſleep.

The breezy Call of Incenſe-breathing Morn,
The Swallow twitt'ring from the Straw-built Shed,
The Cock's ſhrill Clarion, or the ecchoing Horn,
No more ſhall wake them from their lowly Bed.

For them no more the blazing Hearth ſhall burn,
Or buſy Houſwife ply her Evening Care:
No Children run to liſp their Sire's Return,
Or climb his Knees the envied Kiſs to ſhare.

Oft did the Harveſt to their Sickle yield,
Their Furrow oft the ſtubborn Glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their Team afield!
How bow'd the Woods beneath their ſturdy Stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their uſeful Toil,
Their homely Joys and Deſtiny obſcure:
Nor Grandeur hear with a diſdainful Smile,
The ſhort and ſimple Annals of the Poor.

The Boaſt of Heraldry, the Pomp of Pow'r,
And all that Beauty, all that Wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable Hour.
The Paths of Glory lead but to the Grave.

Forgive, ye Proud, th' involuntary Fault,
If Memory to theſe no Trophies raiſe,
Where thro' the long-drawn Iſle and fretted Vault
The pealing Anthem ſwells the Note of Praiſe.

Can ſtoried Urn or animated Buſt
Back to its Manſion call the fleeting Breath?
Can Honour's Voice provoke the ſilent Duſt,
Or Flatt'ry ſooth the dull cold Ear of Death!

Perhaps in this neglected Spot is laid
Some Heart once pregnant with celeſtial Fire,
Hands that the Reins of Empire might have ſway'd,
Or wak'd to Extacy the living Lyre.

But Knowledge to their Eyes her ample Page
Rich with the Spoils of Time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repreſs'd their noble Rage,
And froze the genial Current of the Soul.

Full many a Gem of pureſt Ray ſerene,
The dark unfathom'd Caves of Ocean bear :
Full many a Flower is born to bluſh unſeen,
And waſte its Sweetneſs on the deſart Air.

Some Village-*Hampden* that with dauntleſs Breaſt
The little Tyrants of his Fields withſtood ;
Some mute inglorious *Milton* here may reſt,
Some *Cromwell* guiltleſs of his Country's Blood.

Th' Applauſe of liſt'ning Senates to command,
The Threats of Pain and Ruin to deſpiſe,
To ſcatter Plenty o'er a ſmiling Land,
And read their Hiſt'ry in a Nation's Eyes,

Their Lot forbad : nor circumſcrib'd alone
Their growing Virtues, but their Crimes confin'd ;
Forbad to wade through Slaughter to a Throne,
And ſhut the Gates of Mercy on Mankind,

The ſtruggling Pangs of conſcious Truth to hide,
To quench the Bluſhes of ingenuous Shame,
Or heap the Shrine of Luxury and Pride
Which Incenſe, kindled at the Muſe's Flame.

Far from the madding Crowd's ignoble Strife,
Their ſober Wiſhes never learn'd to ſtray;
Along the cool ſequeſter'd Vale of Life
They kept the noiſeleſs Tenor of their Way.

Yet ev'n theſe Bones from Inſult to protect
Some frail Memorial ſtill erected nigh,
With uncouth Rhimes and ſhapeleſs Sculpture deck'd,
Implores the paſſing Tribute of a Sigh.

Their Name, their Years, ſpelt by th' unletter'd Muſe,
The Place of Fame and Elegy ſupply:
And many a holy Text around ſhe ſtrews,
That teach the ruſtic Moraliſt to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulneſs a Prey,
This pleaſing anxious Being e'er reſign'd,
Left the warm Precincts of the chearful Day,
Nor caſt one longing ling'ring Look behind!

On ſome fond Breaſt the parting Soul relies,
Some pious Drops the cloſing Eye requires;
Ev'n from the Tomb the Voice of Nature cries,
Awake and faithful to her wonted Fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonour'd Dead
Doſt in theſe Lines their artleſs Tale relate;
If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,
Some kindred Spirit ſhall inquire thy Fate,
Haply ſome hoary-headed Swain may ſay,
‘ Oft have we ſeen him at the Peep of Dawn
‘ Bruſhing with haſty Steps the Dews away
‘ To meet the Sun upon the upland Lawn.
‘ There at the Foot of yonder nodding Beech
‘ That wreathes its old fantaſtic Roots ſo high,
‘ His liſtleſs Length at Noontide wou'd he ſtretch,
‘ And pore upon the Brook that bubbles by.
‘ Hard by yon Wood, now frowning as in Scorn,
× ſmiling
‘ Mutt'ring his wayward Fancies he wou'd rove,
‘ Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
‘ Or craz'd with Care, or croſs'd in hopeleſs Love.
‘ One Morn I miſs'd him on the cuſtom'd Hill,
‘ Along the Heath, and near his fav'rite Tree;
‘ Another came; nor yet beſide the Rill,
‘ Nor up the Lawn, nor at the Wood was he.

‘ The

‘ The next with Dirges due in ſad Array,
‘ Slow thro’ the Church-way Path we ſaw him borne.
‘ Approach and read (for thou can’ſt read) the Lay,
‘ Grav’d on the Stone beneath yon aged Thorn.
(‘ There ſcatter’d oft, the earlieſt of the Year,
‘ By Hands unſeen, are ſhow’rs of Violets found ;
‘ The Red-breaſt loves to build and warble there,
‘ And little Footſteps lightly print the Ground.’)

The EPITAPH.

HERE reſts his Head upon the Lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown :
Fair Science frown’d not on his humble Birth,
And Melancholy mark’d him for her own.
Large was his Bounty, and his Soul ſincere,
Heav’n did a Recompence as largely ſend :
He gave to Mis’ry (all he had) a Tear :
He gain’d from Heav’n (’twas all he wiſh’d) a Friend.
No farther ſeek his Merits to diſcloſe,
Or draw his Frailties from their dread Abode,
(There they alike in trembling Hope repoſe)
The Boſom of his Father and his God.

FINIS.

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